

MR. BURRITT: My name is Brad Burritt. And I live near Hotchkiss, Colorado. My father's ancestors settled and homesteaded in Delta County in the Ton [phonetic] Creek area west of Eckert. My family has always farmed in Delta County. And my wife and I own a renewable energy company that installs solar electric systems on the Western Slope. Delta County has always been known for its agriculture and coal mines. We've seen changes in the economy over the years through boom and bust cycles that are driven by commodity prices or when the unexpected happens, like when the Elk Creek mine went idle after a bump and a fire. What we're witnessing now is an historic shift in one of the economic pillars in the North Fork Valley. And that appears to be due primarily to low demand in the market for coal. I have friends and acquaintances who mine, and I'm not glad for the loss of jobs or community income. But, the question is if coal mining isn't going to be what it has been in the past, what do we want our community to look like in the future? Given the timing of the shift in our energy supply, and since 30 years has passed since the last review under President Reagan, I think it makes sense for the Department of Interior to look at updating the coal program. While coal will remain an important energy source for Colorado and the country for some time, we have modern technologies, including renewable energies, that need to be included in planning the country's energy future. As you consider what changes to make to the Federal Coal Program, I hope you'll look to places like Delta County and our County Commissioners for ideas on how Interior can be a partner to local communities and who have been reliant on coal for generations. We don't have all the answers. But, we're figuring it out with things like proactive efforts, expanding broadband access in our communities. Once your review is complete -- and I hope we have a coal -- a more modern coal program -- not one for the early 1900s. But, one for 2016 and beyond. And one that recognizes our changing energy supply and the value we place on our public lands in Colorado for uses other than just energy development. There are thousands of Coloradans who couldn't be here today who support your efforts for a fair review -- fair and comprehensive review and reform of the Federal Coal Leasing Program. For the record, I'm submitting their names on these petitions today. And they're

for you, Director Welch, that I will leave them with the staff that's up front. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.